

Aboriginal **AWARENESS** Workshop

**Saskatchewan
Region
Module**



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Aboriginal Awareness Workshop

Saskatchewan Region Module

This document is not intended to be the definitive historical or cultural account of events, but rather to provide some background information. The research and writing were undertaken by an Aboriginal contractor on behalf of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and the interpretation of events and views expressed herein should not be regarded as necessarily those of the department. Although every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, currency and reliability of the content, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada accepts no responsibility in that regard.

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List of acronyms

DIAND: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development

FSIN: Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations

FTA: Financial Transfer Agreement

MBA: Master of Business Administration

MLTC: Meadow Lake Tribal Council

TLE: Treaty Land Entitlement



Before YOU Start...

This regional module will provide participants and the facilitator with insight on the general issues facing Aboriginal peoples in Saskatchewan. It should be presented by speakers from the host community or region; however, this text can be used to present the unit if speakers are unavailable.

Some of the information highlighted in the Current Activity section was taken from materials available at DIAND's Information Kiosk. Speakers may find it useful to address how some of the initiatives described in this section are developing in the host community.

This module is one of nine, each one corresponding to a different region: the Atlantic, British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, Ontario, Quebec, Yukon, and Saskatchewan.

Statistical Overview of Aboriginal Peoples in Saskatchewan

- 70 First Nations
- 100,719 Status Indians
- 32,840 Métis people
- 242,068 Non-Status Indians

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General Overview

This module introduces participants to the Aboriginal peoples of Saskatchewan, and suggests topics and issues for discussion. Keep in mind, this is only a brief summary of key issues.

Historical Background

Aboriginal people have lived in the Prairie provinces for a long time—perhaps from as early as 6000 BC. In the Old Crow area of the northern Yukon Territory, the remnants of a human encampment, which could be up to 150,000 years old, have been discovered.

For 10,000 years, small bands of nomadic Amerindian hunters roamed the western plains. Most of these original peoples likely drifted south and were replaced by others. From around the third century AD, an agricultural people lived in Saskatchewan. They settled in semi-permanent villages and cultivated gardens along the riverbanks. These people are likely the forefathers of the Plains cultures of the historic period.

We think of buffalo hunting as being a part of the traditional culture of Prairie First Nations. In fact, it's an indirect result of European contact. By the first half of the 18th century, Europeans introduced Canadian First Nations to the horse. This changed their economy, culture, transportation, warfare and patterns of trade and communication.

The British called the Prairie region "the Northwest." Here, different Aboriginal cultures evolved, based on the natural resources at hand. In the south, the buffalo hunt was the centre of Aboriginal culture (although these people were also farmers); in the north, a way of life shaped itself around the hunt for the caribou.

Aboriginal cultures differed in many ways. The Cree, for example, were great travellers, using the birchbark canoe to expand their physical horizons; the Blackfoot were Plains warriors who followed the buffalo. That said, there were also similarities. Before the Europeans came, all Northwest people were nomadic hunters-gatherers, believed that men must test their courage in battle, and thought of the earth as their mother and the animals as their kin. Their history was based on oral tradition; there were no written languages.

Traditional Cultures and Interaction with Euro-Canadian Society

At the time of the first European contact in the 17th century, five prominent cultural groups existed in the Northwest: (roughly from east to west) the Saulteaux (or Ojibway), the Cree, the Assiniboine, the Blackfoot and, to the north, the Chipewyan (often called the Dene).

The Cree

The Cree language belongs to the great Algonkian linguistic group. The Cree, today as well as traditionally, occupy the most land of any First Nation in Canada. Their homelands stretch from northern Quebec in the east to Alberta in the west. In Saskatchewan, they are divided into two distinct groups: the Plains Cree and the Woods Cree. This division is based on geography, but has led to differences in culture and language as well.

For at least the last 7,000 years, the Cree have been thinly spread over the western woodlands where they still live today. The Woods Cree have lived in the boreal and tundra regions of northern Saskatchewan from time immemorial. Traditionally, they fished and hunted moose, caribou, geese, ducks and other small game. After contact, they traded with Europeans, exchanging furs, meat and other goods for metal tools, firearms and other manufactured items.

The Plains Cree came from the east. They moved west with the Hudson's Bay Company in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. There, they dropped their traditional woodland hunting and trapping to become mounted warriors and buffalo hunters. For a time, they acted as middlemen between the European trading posts and other western Aboriginal peoples.

Many Plains Cree preferred the parkland regions along the northern and eastern edges of the plains, which were similar to their traditional eastern woodlands. They ventured out onto the plains to pursue the buffalo herds from the familiar shelter of the forests. But others established themselves permanently on the open prairie.

The Plains Cree were close allies of the Assiniboine. Their traditional territories in southern Saskatchewan overlapped considerably, and they frequently camped and hunted together. They intermarried to such an extent that communities that were neither Cree nor Assiniboine were formed.

The Ojibwa

The Saskatchewan Ojibwa originated in the Upper Great Lakes region and, like the Plains Cree, came west during the fur trade. They reached present-day Saskatchewan by the late 18th century. As with their Cree neighbours, many tended to remain on the periphery of the plains, retaining much of their traditional woodland culture and lifestyle.

Before moving west, the Ojibwa economy was mixed: they hunted, fished and practised horticulture. (They mostly harvested wild rice that grew on the edges of many of the region's lakes.)

When they moved west, the Ojibwa already had a lot of experience working with the fur trade. For a time, they became middlemen between the western First Nations and the French on the St. Lawrence River. But their Cree and Assiniboine neighbours gradually took on this role.

The Assiniboine and Dakota/Nakota/Lakota

Both the Assiniboine and Dakota peoples speak Siouan dialects and originate from the same area: the woodlands of present-day Minnesota and the Dakota states. The Assiniboine are the descendants of a group of Dakota who moved north into the forests around Lake of the Woods, Manitoba.

By the mid-17th century, the Assiniboine were, already, deeply involved with the French in the fur trade and later, under the auspices of the Hudson's Bay Company, moved west into Saskatchewan. Unlike the Plains Cree and Ojibwa, the Assiniboine abandoned almost all their woodland culture, becoming excellent horse-mounted warriors and buffalo hunters.

Throughout the 19th century, the remaining Dakota people of Minnesota moved north to lands that are today Canadian. After the ill-fated Minnesota Uprising of 1862, the first large wave of Dakota refugees moved into Canada. Gradually, many moved west into Saskatchewan (in pursuit of the disappearing buffalo herds) and north to the edge of the prairie.

A second wave of nearly 3,000 Dakota refugees arrived in the Cypress Hill and Wood Mountain area of southwestern Saskatchewan in 1876. They were joined by their famous Chief, Sitting Bull, after he defeated the American cavalry in the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1877. Most of this second wave of Dakota immigrants was forced to return to the United States, because the Canadian government denied them reserves and rations. Only a few families remained to establish a permanent presence in Canada.

Since the Dakota held no traditional lands in Canada, they weren't included in any treaty. But, eventually, they were assigned reserves and awarded status under the *Indian Act*.

The Chipewyan (or Dene)

The Chipewyan or Dene of northern Saskatchewan speak a language that belongs to the Athapaskan group. They traditionally hunted and fished, and a few harvested wild plants. The Dene lived in small, politically isolated groups.

The Saskatchewan Dene followed the huge herds of barren-ground caribou in the northern forest and tundra, and hunted moose, woodland caribou and other game in the boreal forest. They spent the winter in the forest; in spring, they followed the caribou out into the barren lands.

As with the buffalo in the south, the caribou provided far more than food. Caribou hides were used for clothing and shelter, and in snares, fish nets, snowshoe laces and more. Caribou bones and antlers were fashioned into tools, and sinews were used for sewing.

After contact with Europeans, many Dene sought to participate in the fur trade. But the northern forests that were home to the caribou had few of the furbearing animals prized by European traders. So, some Dene moved west and south into Saskatchewan's boreal forests.

In 1670, Charles II of England granted to the Hudson's Bay Company "ownership of all lands whose waters drain into the Hudson Bay." This area was known as Rupert's Land and included all of Manitoba, most of Saskatchewan and the northern half of Alberta, as well as much of northern Ontario and Quebec.

The First Nations living there didn't object to the charter—they didn't even know it existed. As long as the Europeans only attempted to establish isolated fur trading posts, the First Nations could continue to use their traditional territory—and that was what they wanted. They began to trade with the Hudson's Bay Company and the Northwest Company, but their culture remained relatively unchanged until settlers began to farm along the Red River in the 19th century.

The idea of permanently farming a piece of land was foreign to First Nation peoples. Legal ownership was also alien to them. They believed the land, like the air they breathed, couldn't belong to an individual; nor could it be bought, sold, mortgaged or used for speculation. Land could be used by people, but it was the Creator's gift.

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The Métis People

The term "Métis" comes from the French word meaning "mixed." It refers to the offspring of interracial marriages between European and Aboriginal people. In western Canada, it was applied to the offspring of European fur traders and Aboriginal (especially Cree) women, and to those who were already of mixed ancestry when they arrived on the prairies. Today, the term has a wider meaning; not all Métis people today trace their roots back to those who fit the original definition.

The classic Métis culture of the Canadian prairies developed in the early 19th century near where the Red and Assiniboine rivers meet in Manitoba. A combination of geography, social isolation and a common way of life was the framework of the distinct Métis identity.

Despite a sense of common identity, Métis people were actually quite different: they had different religions, languages and cultures. Métis people of French descent were Roman Catholic. Others were of English and Scottish descent, and belonged to the Anglican and Presbyterian churches. The French Métis people led a semi-nomadic way of life, while their English counterparts settled as farmers.

These groups were united chiefly by marriage and participation in the annual buffalo hunt. Gradually, a distinct composite Métis language emerged, Michif, based primarily on Cree and French, but borrowing from English, Gaelic and other Aboriginal languages of the area.

By the second half of the 19th century, Métis people began to feel the threat of Euro-Canadian immigration from the east. Many moved west, and Métis settlements appeared for the first time in Saskatchewan.

In the 1870s, while Euro-Canadian settlers were establishing the nearby town of Prince Albert, some 1,500 Métis people founded the villages of St. Laurent and Batoche in the south Saskatchewan valley. Métis people from the Red River Colony reinforced the Métis culture of these villages after Euro-Canadian settlement in Manitoba pushed them from their homes.

The First Nations of Saskatchewan and Euro-Canadian Settlement

The westward expansion of the Canadian agricultural frontier in the second half of the 19th century was disastrous for Saskatchewan First Nations. Through the fur trade, the Aboriginal peoples of the region had been drawn into the colonial economic system as willing and indispensable partners. But this era of economic and social partnership came to a swift end with the

southern collapse of the fur trade, the disappearance of the great buffalo herds and the mass arrival of agricultural settlers from the east. Suddenly, First Nations were economically redundant; they were quickly reduced to a position of weakness and poverty.

The doctrine of "progress" made the settlement and agrarian transformation of the Prairies appear to Euro-Canadians as both inevitable and good. By the 1860s, the invention of the repeating rifle and the coming of the American transcontinental railways quickly led to the decimation of the great buffalo herds. The buffalo had been the economic basis of Plains Nations, and their disappearance destroyed the old Aboriginal economies.

For First Nations, the decade of 1865-1875 brought an end to their traditional way of life. Thousands died from smallpox. Whisky traders moved north, with devastating results. The buffalo were virtually wiped out. And settlers started streaming in.

The Riel Rebellions

By 1812 a "new nation," composed of the Métis offspring of Europeans and Aboriginal people, had sprung up and was a dominant force in the fur trade community. Although Lord Selkirk had negotiated a treaty with some of the Ojibway in the area, his colonial administrators alienated the Métis people by legislating restrictions on their trade practices.

In 1816, a convoy of Métis people transporting a shipment of pemmican was confronted by the colony's governor and a group of settlers armed with rifles and a cannon. In what's now called the Battle of Seven Oaks, one Métis person and 21 settlers, including the governor, were killed. In a subsequent treaty, European settlers were forced to leave the region temporarily.

This turned out to be little more than a slowdown to settlement in the West. In 1869, the British, the recently formed Canadian government and the Hudson's Bay Company talked about transferring the Northwest Company lands to the Canadian government. Government surveyors were sent to Red River. Métis people were not consulted, though they made up the majority in the Red River settlement.

Under the leadership of Louis Riel, they took over Fort Garry and, from this position of strength, formed a provisional government to negotiate with Ottawa. Riel's government fought for linguistic, religious, educational and

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land rights, which were all included in the *Manitoba Act* of 1870. The Act created a small, self-governing province and a vast unit called the Northwest Territories, administered by Ottawa. Prime Minister John A. MacDonald granted Métis people security of tenure on occupied lands and reserved 566,580 hectares for their unmarried children. The Canadian government then sent in troops, and Riel fled into exile.

Métis people soon lost most of their land grant to speculators. Others, who held river lots, found it impossible to get clear title because of their semi-nomadic way of life. They followed the buffalo west, and established camps in what became Saskatchewan and Alberta. Their claims for land rights along the South Saskatchewan River were rejected by the government.

Frustrated, Métis people turned again to Louis Riel, who was by now teaching school in Montana. In 1885, Riel led the last armed resistance against the Canadian government. They were defeated at Batoche, Saskatchewan. Riel and 10 Aboriginal leaders were hanged, and many Métis people went north and west to gather in villages in what is now northern Alberta.

The Treaty Process in Saskatchewan

Ottawa was not alone in fearing invasion and annexation from the south. Given the hard choice between domination by the American Republic or by British North America (in the form of the new Canadian state), Saskatchewan First Nations picked Canada. Ottawa was the lesser of two evils.

In the winter of 1872-1873, the Cypress Hills Massacre, in what's now southern Saskatchewan, helped First Nations ally with Canada. A group of American whiskey traders turned on an Assiniboine Nation camped near one of the local "whiskey forts." Some 20 Assiniboine men were killed; five women were kidnapped and raped.

The Canadian desire to negotiate treaties, and a peaceful and orderly settlement of the west, seemed preferable to the lawless chaos of the American frontier. And by the 1870s, most First Nations were suffering great economic hardship and increasing social disruption. Their traditions had been undermined economically; they wanted, and desperately needed, positive and constructive change. Negotiating a just settlement with Ottawa was high on the agenda for many Saskatchewan First Nations in the 1870s.

Ottawa recognized the need for treaty negotiation and peaceful settlement. First, it complied with British policy initiated with the Royal Proclamation of 1763; second, as the Riel Rebellions had shown, negotiation and legal settlement were cheap compared to military action in a distant and still relatively inaccessible portion of the country. The American government could

afford to send in the troops regularly to solve the "Indian problem;" Ottawa couldn't.

Aboriginal Peoples in Saskatchewan Today

Today, the Saulteaux live in central and southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan, as well as western Ontario; the Assiniboine in Saskatchewan and Alberta; the Blackfoot (and their confederacy of Piegan and Blood tribes) only in Alberta; the Cree and Chipewyan in all three provinces, with the Chipewyan in the northern parts.

Many Dakota-Sioux came to Canada in 1876 as refugees after their wars with the American cavalry. Reserve lands were set aside for them in the southern Prairies, but they didn't sign treaties.

Although they have traditionally lived in rural and remote areas, the Aboriginal people in the Prairies show a strong trend of migrating to cities—DIAND estimates that about one third of Status Indians now live outside First Nation communities (reserves), mostly in urban areas.

Both the growth in the Aboriginal population and the migration to urban centres are matters of concern to social analysts, mainly because Aboriginal people experience severe social problems in making this move. The statistics in First Nation communities also paint a horrific picture.

- More than half of Saskatchewan's reservation houses lack indoor plumbing.
- In 1987, 70 percent of all inmates at Stony Mountain, the federal penitentiary near Winnipeg, were of Aboriginal origin.
- The suicide rate is three times the national average.
- Unemployment ranges between 35 and 75 percent in First Nation communities. Only one in five Status Indians ever complete high school.
- In 1985, 51.8 percent of Aboriginal children in Saskatchewan were in the care of child welfare agencies.
- Of the Saskatchewan prison population, 62 percent is of Aboriginal origin.

Since mid-century, Saskatchewan Aboriginal peoples have become more politically active. Their interests are represented by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians and the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan.

Discouraging as such statistics are, Aboriginal people want to maintain a proud heritage and a separate identity. They don't—and won't—forget that they are the original inhabitants of Canada; nor will they let others forget.

Chiefs and First Nations Councils

For Status Indians, the smallest political unit is the band, or First Nation. Each band elects councillors and a Chief.

Band councils were introduced by the *Indian Act*. The council's powers are limited, and can't be exercised without majority agreement.

The usual term of a Chief and council is two years. This changes only if a Chief or councillor is convicted of an offence, dies, resigns or becomes, in some way, ineligible to hold office. If this vacancy occurs more than three months before an election date, a special election is called.

Traditional Chiefs and Band Councils

With a traditional band council, elections are called when a specified majority decides it's time. Terms are determined by custom. Elders play an important role in the community. Chosen because of their age, family or knowledge, their teachings of life are valued. Elders are, usually, called upon when decision makers need guidance and wise counsel; they are sometimes asked to mediate conflicts.

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Regional Concerns

Land Claims: Background

Aboriginal organizations in the West are seeking compensation for the land they lost when the Northwest Company came under Canadian government jurisdiction. The government of that time, having signed treaties with Aboriginal people, considered all Aboriginal rights extinguished and the matter closed. This hasn't been the case; land claims are still a lively issue and will likely remain so in the years to come.

In 1871, the first treaty signed in the Northwest was with First Nations in southern Manitoba. The government insisted that the size of the reserves be set at 12.95 hectares per person; earlier treaties had offered four times as much. Later, a few First Nations did sign treaties giving them 51.80 hectares per person. This was the standard used for subsequent treaties, except for Treaty No. 5, which reverted to the smaller number.

Claims Related to Treaty

As it happened, First Nations often didn't get as much land as they were entitled to, and what they did get was of poor quality.

In calculating the formula, the government based its population figures on the number of Aboriginal people who had received the previous annual treaty payment (lands were not reserved immediately after treaties were signed). Those who were sick, hunting or working for the Hudson's Bay Company and couldn't be there at the time of the treaty payment, weren't counted.

In other cases, Aboriginal people who signed treaties in later years were added to the membership of existing bands; but no land was added. Sometimes, land was promised, but never delivered.

Aboriginal organizations today argue that First Nations and the government each had a different understanding of the kind of transaction taking place when the treaties were signed. Aboriginal people had never measured land in hectares or acres and weren't clear on the size of the area being reserved for them. They also couldn't foresee the massive migration of settlers that was to come; they didn't think they were completely and absolutely giving up their traditional lands. Their intent was to give white people permission to use it.

Treaties in the Prairie Region

Between 1871 and 1921, the Government of Canada negotiated 11 treaties with First Nations in the northern and western parts of the country. These are the "numbered treaties," and apply to most Status Indians in the Prairie provinces, and some in Ontario and the Northwest Territories.

These treaties guaranteed First Nations certain rights in perpetuity in exchange for their land. But they turned out to be more open to interpretation than the government had anticipated. Their meaning is being hotly debated today, particularly in the area of land rights and Aboriginal self-government.

The numbered treaties contain the same basic provisions: in exchange for surrendering their right and title to their lands, Aboriginal people are to receive money in perpetuity and reserves of land for their own use. Treaties Nos. 1-7, which were contracted to open up the West for settlement, gave First Nations tools, livestock and seed grain. Treaties Nos. 3-11 included a guarantee of hunting and fishing rights. Treaty No. 6 included a "medicine chest" clause.

First Nations entered into these treaties at a difficult time. The source of their culture, the buffalo, was disappearing from the Plains; the fur trade was in decline; epidemics of diseases introduced by Europeans had killed and weakened many. The Canadian government had demonstrated its military power by sending troops to Fort Garry in 1870, and a large influx of settlers seemed imminent.

They had little choice but to agree to the treaties and not much to bargain with, except for an appeal for justice. The government declared its intention to deal with them justly, but was anxious to negotiate a formal arrangement before widespread surveys or settlement took place. Agents had reported that a failure to do so might well result in isolated, perhaps organized, attacks on settlers by First Nations.

Treaty signing was a public event, with attendant pomp and ceremony. The government treaty commissioners were, in general, inflexible, trying to make as few concessions as possible and keep terms uniform.

The government had to concede more than it would have liked at times but ultimately held the upper hand. Often, verbal promises were made at a treaty signing. Some were eventually incorporated into the written terms; others haven't been fulfilled to this day. Remember: to First Nations, a verbal promise had just as much force as a written one.

In Saskatchewan, Aboriginal people signed "numbered treaties" with the federal government. Those affecting Saskatchewan are:

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| Treaty No. 2 | (1871)—Southern Manitoba (west of Lake Winnipeg), southeast Saskatchewan |
| Treaty No. 4 | (1874)—Southern Saskatchewan and southwestern Alberta |
| Treaty No. 6 | (1876)—Central Alberta and southern and mid-Saskatchewan |
| Treaty No. 10 | (1906)—Northern Alberta and northern Saskatchewan
(1908)—Northern Manitoba. |

These treaties were signed to open up the West to development and settlement. Some were written, some verbal; all were based on the surrender of Aboriginal land rights. The federal government wanted to develop railroads across Aboriginal lands. In return, it gave First Nations reserve lands, money and an allowance for schooling and medicine.

The actual terms of the treaties were often unfulfilled, or interpreted in as narrow a way as possible. Numerous specific claims arise today out of these treaties.

Federal Claims Policy

In 1973, the federal government announced a policy that recognized the Aboriginal right to file land claims. This included specific claims resulting from unfulfilled treaty obligations, and comprehensive claims made by groups not under treaty. Unfortunately, the specific claims policy applied only to Status Indians belonging to a band, and the comprehensive claims policy applied only to territory north of the 60th parallel and part of British Columbia. What this did was exclude Métis people and Non-Status Indians.

An Office of Native Claims was established within DIAND in 1974. It was to conduct research, represent the government in claims negotiations with Aboriginal groups and formulate related policies. Aboriginal organizations were funded to conduct their own land claims research.

Specific claims for unfulfilled treaty land entitlements were soon filed. The main point of contention was whether to use population figures at the time of the original surveys, or those of the present day, to determine the amount of land Aboriginal groups were entitled to.

First Nations argued that acreage must be calculated based on current populations in order to compensate for losses suffered because they hadn't been able to use it for many years. Provincial governments have disagreed—except for Saskatchewan, which, in 1976, agreed to use current figures.

The amount of land at stake is substantial—more than 404,760 hectares in Saskatchewan, if you use today's population figures in the formula. First Nations, hoping to alleviate the depressing social conditions which exist in some First Nations communities, want valuable land. But, right now, the kind of land they want is used for mining, forestry, generating hydro-electric power and farming. Aboriginal organizations have agreed that if sufficient unoccupied Crown land of good value is unavailable near existing First Nations communities, they'll take land elsewhere, or money.

The Métis Claim

When the buffalo had gone and First Nations were obliged to negotiate with the Europeans who had moved into the Northwest, the main issue was, of course, land. There were precedents for negotiations in Manitoba. Treaties had been signed in Ontario between First Nations and the Crown, which was represented first by the Government of Britain and, after Confederation, by the Government of Canada.

In the *Manitoba Act* of 1870, the federal government recognized the Métis land title claim by setting aside 566,580 hectares as a land bank for present and future needs. After the Riel Rebellion of 1885, additional land grants and sometimes scrip (which gave the right to lay claim on certain areas of unoccupied Crown land) were given to Métis people of the Northwest. The government thought this extinguished Métis rights to land.

The *Constitution Act* of 1982 recognizes and confirms Aboriginal rights and goes on to specify that Aboriginal peoples include Indian, Inuit and Métis people. Métis people take this to mean that they have legitimate comprehensive land claims.

Treaty Issues and Benefits

Status Indians, whether under treaty or not, are accorded benefits under the *Indian Act*. Some, such as tax exemption, don't apply to those who live off reserves. Others, such as free education and medical care, have since been extended to all Canadians, and so have lost their original significance.

Apart from land claims, there are three main treaty issues that Aboriginal organizations and government are trying to resolve:

- hunting, trapping and fishing rights;
- levels of funding for Indian programs; and
- Aboriginal self-government.

Hunting, Trapping and Fishing Rights

Treaties stipulate that First Nations can hunt, trap and fish on unoccupied Crown lands. But federal laws that regulate fish and wildlife also apply to Aboriginal people. First Nations claim these laws violate treaty promises because they restrict Aboriginal access to hunting and fishing. An example is the *Migratory Birds Convention Act*. First Nations have applied to the courts for an exemption several times, without success.

Funding Levels

Treaties don't specify the level of funding the government owes First Nations. In many First Nation communities, housing is scarce and far below the Canadian standard, and funding for schools and economic development is low. First Nations argue that funding levels should be raised to comply with the spirit of the treaties.

Self-Government

First Nations believe a treaty is binding under international law. As such, it can only be made by an entity with an international legal personality. Because First Nations have signed treaties, they were recognized—and should be recognized today—as sovereign nations. The self-government issue was brought sharply into focus in 1969 when the government issued its controversial White Paper. It proposed that First Nations receive the same government services, property rights and legal status as other Canadians. The paper proposed that all treaty claims be settled and that First Nation lands be placed under First Nation control. This would lead to the end of treaties.

Aboriginal leaders reacted quickly and angrily. They believed that in addition to the normal rights and duties of citizenship, they were entitled to certain additional rights as charter members of the Canadian community.

Treaties, they argued, go on forever because Aboriginal right to land and their sovereignty as a nation are unchanging facts. There is still debate over what that sovereignty means today.

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CurrentActivity

In August 1995, the Canadian government launched a process to negotiate self-government with Aboriginal groups across Canada. In Saskatchewan, nine First Nations, represented by the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, have started to negotiate a comprehensive self-government agreement.

First Nations Oil and Gas Management Initiative

In Saskatchewan, and in Alberta, a First Nations Oil and Gas Management Initiative was launched in 1994 by DIAND and the Canadian Indian Energy Corporation, an organization representing about 100 First Nations in Western Canada and Ontario. The objective? To enable five First Nations to manage their oil and gas resources.

Participating First Nations start off by sharing management decision making with the federal government. Gradually, they take on more control until they have sole responsibility.

The White Bear First Nation in Saskatchewan was the first to participate; later, four Alberta First Nations joined (the Horse Lake, Siksika and Dene Tha' First Nations, and the Blood Tribe).

Change in Oil and Gas Regulations

In 1995, the Indian Oil and Gas Regulations were introduced. First Nations must now be consulted by industry and government before and during the exploration and development of oil and gas resources on First Nation lands.

Dialogue for Change

Between 1871 and 1906, the Government of Canada signed six treaties with the First Nations of what would become Saskatchewan. Former Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Ron Irwin, asked some First Nations how to establish a process to interpret treaties in contemporary terms, while recognizing their original spirit and intent.

Exploratory treaty discussion, facilitated by the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, is under way with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN). A common table consisting of representatives of the Government of Canada, the Government of Saskatchewan and the FSIN has been established to oversee self-government negotiations.

Co-Management

Since being invited to do so by the Government of Saskatchewan, DIAND has worked with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations to establish the Saskatchewan Co-management Innovation Initiative. This four-year program provides Saskatchewan First Nations with funding to plan for and carry out co-management negotiations, and for start-up activities once agreements have been reached. It also provides funding for province-wide initiatives, such as training, to help the co-management process in Saskatchewan.

To date, the program has supported co-management projects with both the province and the private sector. These projects address a variety of First Nations interests, including forestry, fishing, water, mining, tourism and the environment. Two province-wide initiatives have also been supported.

Land Claims

Resolving land claims is a major priority for both the federal government and Aboriginal peoples. Studies indicate that land claims settlements often create an economic boom, with spinoffs in neighbouring non-Aboriginal communities.

*First Nations
must now be
consulted by
industry and
government before
and during the
exploration and
development of oil
and gas resources
on First Nation
lands.*

Treaty Land Entitlement Developments

At the turn of the century, the Canadian government signed treaties with Aboriginal peoples in Saskatchewan so that land could be occupied peacefully by incoming settlers. One of the government's commitments under these treaties was to provide land to First Nations. But many didn't receive as much as they were entitled to. Today, they are settling these grievances with treaty land entitlement initiatives.

Twenty-five First Nations signed the Saskatchewan Treaty Land Entitlement Agreement and, as of September 1995, all have been ratified. The agreement

allows signatory First Nations to buy land to add to their First Nation communities in compensation.

The federal and provincial governments will provide the 25 First Nations with \$450 million over 12 years to purchase land and mineral rights. Purchases are made only if buyers and sellers agree, and all existing public and third-party interests in the land are protected.

The Treaty No. 4 First Nations in Saskatchewan reached a final agreement in 1995. This resolved a disagreement over the interpretation of a 100-year-old treaty, and involves land at Fort Qu'Appelle. The Treaty No. 4 Grounds Claim Settlement Agreement provides \$6.6 million in monetary compensation and up to 526 hectares of undeveloped land within a 10-kilometre radius of the Treaty No. 4 reserve lands.

Community and Economic Development

Meadow Lake Tribal Council

The Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC) in northern Saskatchewan received a prestigious award for its exceptional economic development work.

The Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers recognized the MLTC for its long-term strategy to create healthy and prosperous communities.

The MLTC has a 20-year plan for the Meadow Lake region. It includes the development of sectors such as tourism, forestry, mining, agriculture and food processing, business, construction, and oil and gas.

One is already well established. Norsask Forest Products, a forestry company owned by the MLTC since 1988, employs 240 people and is the major regional employer for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

First Nation Casinos

The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) is examining how to operate four community casinos in accordance with a provincial agreement announced in 1995.

Under the agreement, the FSIN can set up four casinos in the province. If casinos are located on reserve, 50 percent of the proceeds go to First Nations, 25 percent to First Nation charities and 25 percent to the province. If casinos are operated off reserve, the 25 percent earmarked for Aboriginal charities goes to off-reserve charities and non-profit organizations.

Shopping Made Easier

Restrictions under the *Indian Act* make businesses reluctant to set up shop in First Nation communities. But due to the vision of a group of Aboriginal entrepreneurs, the Cowessess First Nation has brought shopping closer to home. The Cowessess First Nation opened a shopping mall in their community in 1995. Shops include a laundromat, clothing store, restaurant, bank, gas bar, grocery store and ice cream parlour. The First Nation council owns the grocery store; all others are owned by Aboriginal entrepreneurs.

Aboriginal Education and Training

Increased Funding for Post-Secondary Education

First Nations and Inuit are working with the federal government to increase educational opportunities. Over the years, the federal government has steadily increased post-secondary education funding to an annual budget of approximately \$284 million. The program assists annually about 27,000 post-secondary students across Canada—over 3,000 in Saskatchewan.

Specialized Aboriginal Education Programs

Two post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan have created a Master of Business Administration (MBA) program tailored to Aboriginal peoples.

The MBA program combines business concepts, Aboriginal studies and Aboriginal values, and their application in business. It was created by the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College and the University of Saskatchewan.

The Saskatchewan Indian Federated College was recently awarded a contract to offer a dental therapy training program. It trains people to provide dental care in Aboriginal communities. This is a concrete example of the government transferring control of health services to First Nations, whose institutions can deliver health programs.

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More Recent Activity

Aboriginal Rights

The province now recognizes the inherent right of self-government for First Nations people.

Financial Transfer Agreements (FTAs)

A new type of funding arrangement between First Nations and the Government of Canada allows First Nations to tailor programs and services to fit the needs of their own communities.

As of August 1997, FTAs have been signed and implemented with seven Saskatchewan First Nations.

Treaty Land Entitlement

The Saskatchewan Treaty Land Entitlement (TLE) Framework Agreement was signed by both the federal and provincial governments and 25 Saskatchewan First Nations in 1992. Reserve creation is proceeding for signatory First Nations.

Three more Saskatchewan First Nations have signed their own TLE settlement agreements since 1992. In total, 28 First Nations are now under Treaty Land Entitlement.

Re-Establishment of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner

In October 1996, this office was re-established to facilitate self-government negotiations and to assist with exploratory discussions on treaty issues.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

An MOU was signed between the Government of Canada, the province of Saskatchewan and Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) to establish the first-ever tripartite fiscal relations table.

This MOU is aimed at developing new fiscal relationships and a funding mechanism to support Aboriginal self-government. It calls for the establishment of a work plan which integrates and co-ordinates federal, provincial and First Nation fiscal jurisdictions. This MOU could become a model for developing similar relations in other regions of the country.

List of Saskatchewan First Nations

First Nations	Linguistic Group	Language
406 Ahtahkakoop	Algonkian*	Cree
369 Beardy's and Okemasis	Algonkian	Cree
404 Big River	Algonkian	Cree
403 Birch Narrows First Nation	Athapaskan	Chipewyan**
359 Black Lake	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
398 Buffalo River Dene Nation	Athapaskan	Chipewyan/Dene
394 Canoe Lake	Algonkian	Cree
378 Carry the Kettle	Siouan	Assiniboine/Dakota
401 Clearwater River Dene	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
366 Cote First Nation 366	Algonkian	Ojibway
361 Cowessess	Algonkian	Cree

other spelling forms: * Algonkin, Algonquian

** Chippewyan, Chippewyan



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other spelling forms: * Algonkin, Algonquian

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First Nations	Linguistic Group	Language
350 Cumberland House Cree Nation	Algonkian	Cree
389 Day Star	Algonkian	Cree
400 English River First Nation	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
390 Fishing Lake First Nation	Algonkian	Ojibway
395 Flying Dust First Nation	Algonkian	Cree
351 Fond du Lac	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
391 Gordon	Algonkian	Ojibway/Cree
352 Hatchet Lake	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
397 Island Lake First Nation	Algonkian	Cree
370 James Smith	Algonkian	Cree
399 Joseph Bighead	Algonkian	Cree
362 Kahewistahaw	Algonkian	Cree
393 Kawacatoose	Algonkian	Cree/Saulteaux
367 Keeseekoose	Algonkian	Ojibway

First Nations	Linguistic Group	Language
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368 Key	Algonkian	Ojibway
377 Kinistin	Athapaskan	Chipewyan
353 Lac La Ronge	Algonkian	Cree
379 Little Black Bear	Algonkian	Cree
340 Little Pine	Algonkian	Cree
341 Lucky Man	Algonkian	Cree
396 Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation	Algonkian	Cree
374 Mistawasis	Algonkian	Cree
354 Montreal Lake	Algonkian	Cree
342 Moosomin	Algonkian	Cree
343 Mosquito-Grizzly Bear's Head	Siouan	Assiniboiné
381 Muscowpetung	Algonkian	Ojibway/Cree
375 Muskeg Lake	Algonkian	Cree
371 Muskoday First Nation	Algonkian	Cree

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First Nations	Linguistic Group	Language
392 Muskowekwan	Algonkian	Ojibway
380 Nekaneet	Algonkian	Cree
408 Ocean Man	Algonkian	Assiniboine/ Cree/Saulteaux
363 Ochapowace	Algonkian	Cree
382 Okanese	Algonkian	Ojibway/Cree
373 One Arrow	Algonkian	Cree
344 Onion Lake	Algonkian	Cree
383 Pasqua First Nation No. 79	Algonkian	Ojibway/Cree
405 Pelican Lake	Algonkian	Cree
384 Peepeekisis	Algonkian	Cree
355 Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation	Algonkian	Cree
409 Pheasant Rump Nakota	Algonkian/ Cree	Assiniboine/ Saulteaux
385 Piapot	Algonkian	Cree
345 Poundmaker	Algonkian	Cree

First Nations	Linguistic Group	Language
356 Red Earth	Algonkian	Cree
346 Red Pheasant	Algonkian	Cree
364 Sakimay	Algonkian	Cree
347 Saulteaux	Algonkian	Ojibway
357 Shoal Lake of the Cree Nation	Algonkian	Cree
386 Standing Buffalo	Siouan	Dakota
387 Star Blanket	Algonkian	Cree
360 Sturgeon Lake First Nation	Algonkian	Cree
348 Sweetgrass	Algonkian	Cree
349 Thunderchild First Nation	Algonkian	Cree
358 Wahpeton Dakota Nation	Sioux	Dakota
402 Waterhen Lake	Algonkian	Cree
365 White Bear	Algonkian/ Sioux	Cree/Ojibway/ Assiniboine
372 Whitecap Dakota/Sioux First Nation	Sioux	Sioux

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First Nations	Linguistic Group	Language
407 Witchehan Lake	Algonkian	Cree
388 Wood Mountain	Sioux	Dakota
376 Yellow Quill	Algonkian	Ojibway

NOTE: The Ojibway in Saskatchewan and other western provinces are also known as the "Saulteaux."

NOTE: The First Nation listing can be found in the Indian Register, DIAND, 1999. Other demographics and statistical data are available through the regional DIAND office.



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